YOHO NATIONAL PARK
LAKE O'HARA AREA PLAN
Draft

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YOHO NATIONAL PARK
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Preface

This document describes the proposed management concept for the Lake O'Hara area. Detailed planning is required for the Lake O'Hara portion of Yoho National Park due to the high level of development and intensity of visitor use in this backcountry area. The Lake O'Hara Area Plan will assist the Canadian Parks Service in setting priorities for the management of this area during the next 10-15 years.

The plan describes the role of the Lake O'Hara area within the spectrum of backcountry opportunities available in Yoho National Park and contains recommendations for the monitoring of resources and visitor experiences, the establishment of maximum capacities and seasons-of-use for overnight facilities, and the operation of the public transportation and reservation systems.

Public response is sought for the plan concept proposals, particularly those which present options for the redevelopment of overnight accommodations, the size of the day-use quota, and the operation of the Canadian Parks Service's reservation system

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Lake O'Hara area (**Fig 1**) has been the focus of intensive recreation use and development for the last 80 years. Spectacular alpine scenery, limited motorized access, historic overnight accommodation and an extensive and varied trail system have made a visit to the Lake O'Hara area one of the most sought-after experiences in Canada's Rocky Mountain national parks.

By 1970 intensive and long-term recreation use had resulted in biophysical deterioration to portions of the area. This deterioration led the Canadian Parks Service to initiate management actions during the 1970's to protect the area's resources. The Lake O'Hara Area Plan will establish a framework for the future management of this area and will help ensure that both the heritage resources and visitor opportunities for park experiences are protected.

This document describes proposed visitor uses and how visitor experiences and the resource base may be managed and monitored to ensure the long-term environmental sustainability of this area within Yoho National Park.

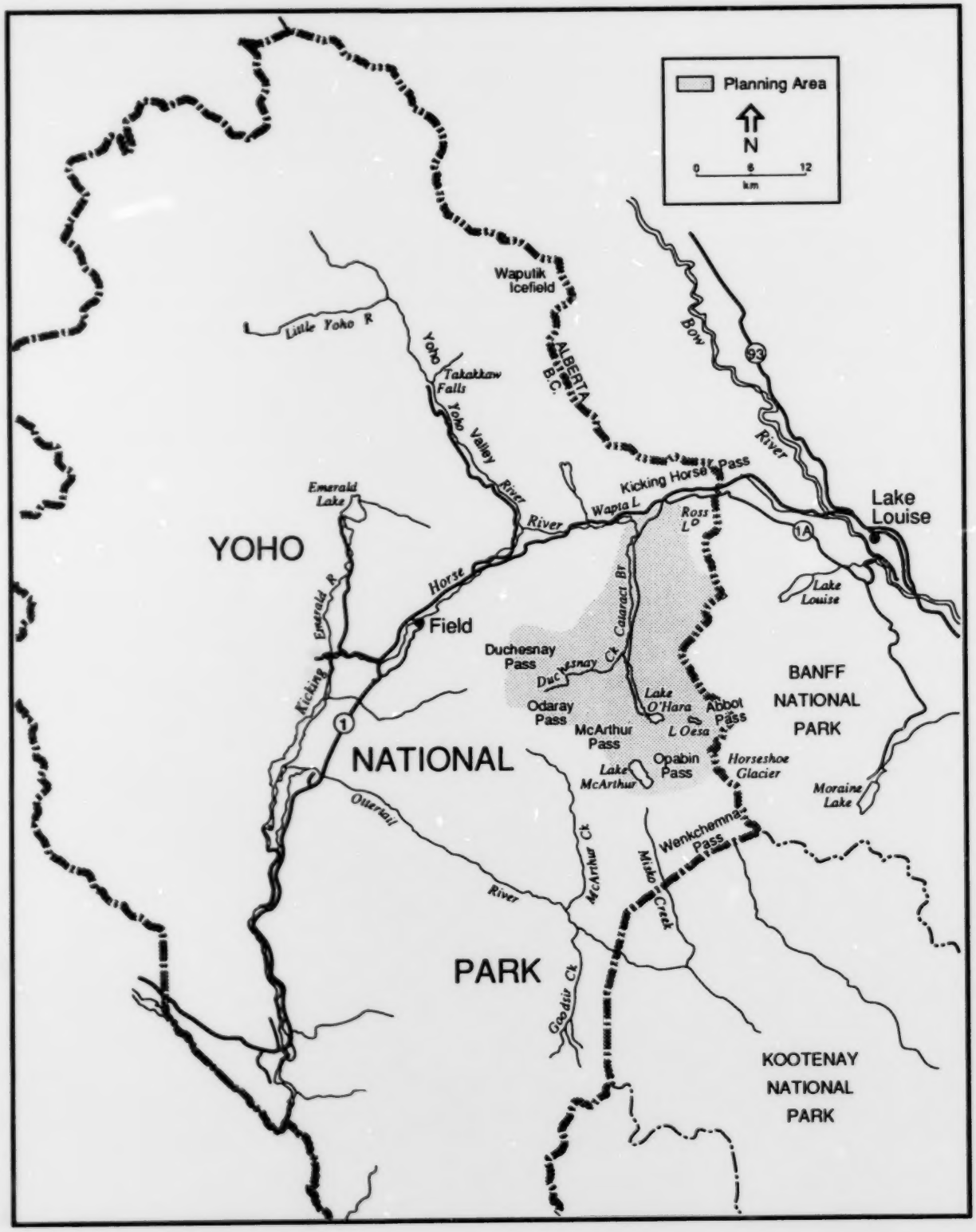

Figure 1. Planning Area Location

1.1 The Planning Process and Role of Public Consultation

The planning concept is an important step (**Fig 2**) in the development of the Lake O'Hara Area Plan. It has been prepared by a planning team of Yoho National Park staff with assistance from Canadian Parks Service Western Region and input from representatives of stakeholder groups.

Highlights of the draft plan are being sent to the approximately 600 people on the mailing list for the Lake O'Hara Area planning program. In addition, open houses will be held in August and October to enable the public to take their comments and recommendations directly to the planners and park managers.

Public response to the draft plan will be used to develop the final Lake O'Hara Area Plan prior to its adoption by Yoho National Park. The final plan will guide the management of the Lake O'Hara area for the next 10-15 years. Once approved by the park superintendent, the plan will also be subject to review every five years.

1.2 Plan Context

Although the Lake O'Hara Area Plan focuses on a small geographic area within Yoho National Park, the area fits within a broad policy and management context. The Canadian Parks Service's mission is carried out in three broad areas of responsibility: the protection of heritage resources (both natural and cultural); the fostering of a sense of environmental stewardship; and the reinforcement of Canada's national and international identity.

The Yoho National Park Management Plan, approved by the Minister of Environment in 1988, establishes a framework for the protection and management of heritage resources, sets guidelines for appropriate levels of development and visitor activities, and provides direction for achieving the goals of Yoho National Park within a regional setting of adjacent national parks and provincial lands.

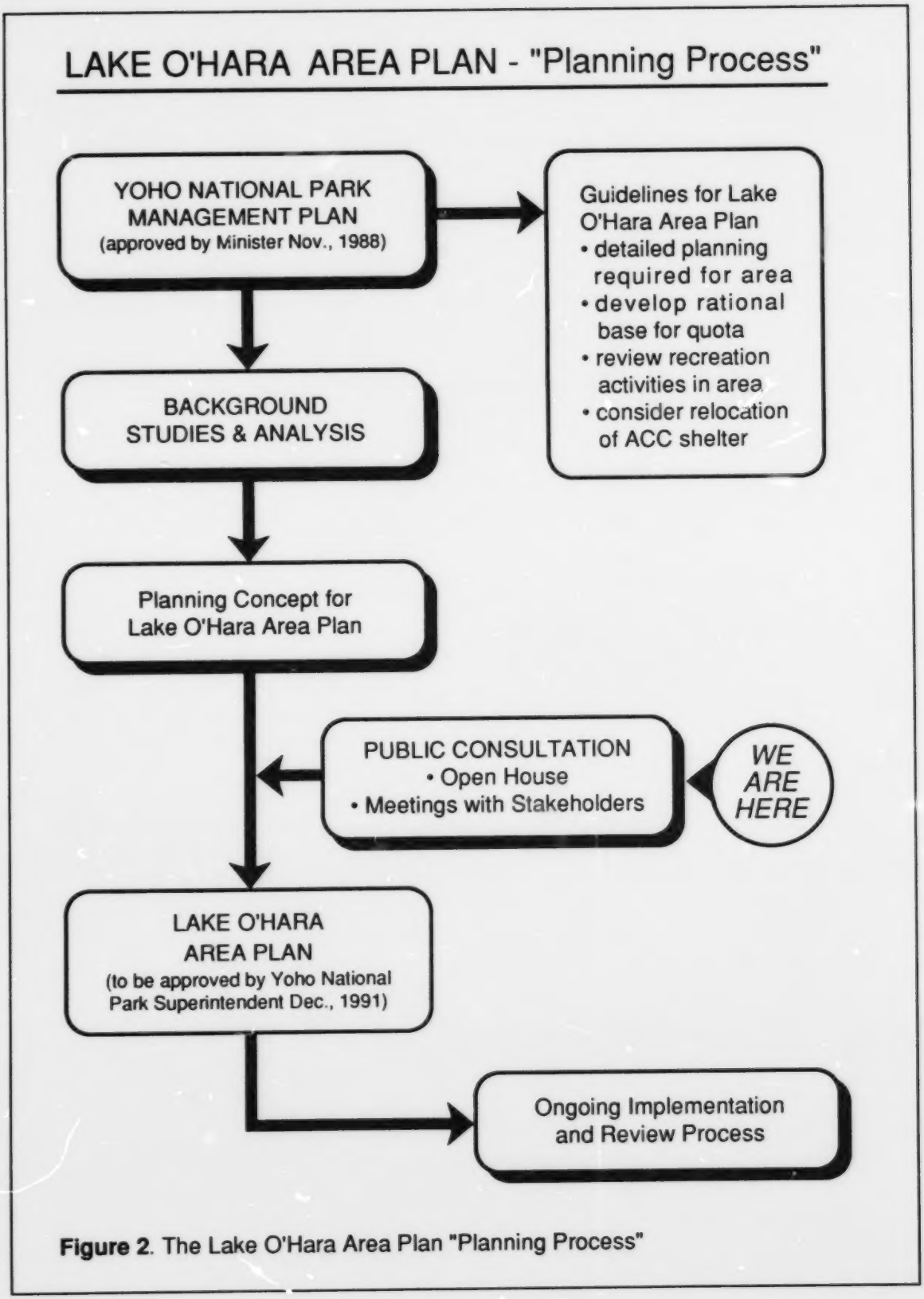
LAKE O'HARA AREA PLAN - "Planning Process"
YOHO NATIONAL PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN (approved by Minister Nov., 1988)
Guidelines for Lake O'Hara Area Plan
• detailed planning required for area
• develop rational base for quota
• review recreation activities in area
• consider relocation of ACC shelter
BACKGROUND STUDIES & ANALYSIS
Planning Concept for Lake O'Hara Area Plan
PUBLIC CONSULTATION
• Open House
• Meetings with Stakeholders
WE ARE HERE
LAKE O'HARA AREA PLAN (to be approved by Yoho National Park Superintendent Dec., 1991)
Ongoing Implementation and Review Process

Figure 2. The Lake O'Hara Area Plan "Planning Process"

VISION STATEMENT - LAKE O'HARA IN 2007

The Lake O'Hara area will be recognized by visitors as a special place within Yoho National Park where Canadians - young or old - can experience the cultural tradition and natural heritage values of this unique backcountry area of the Rocky Mountain National Parks.

The visitor will enjoy this experience in a natural, uncrowded setting which is managed to maintain the integrity of its ecological processes. People coming to Lake O'Hara will have the freedom to choose from a wide variety of hiking-based experiences from leisurely walks to challenging adventures. Visitors will have the necessary awareness to behave in an appropriate manner for the activities they engage in and will assist the Canadian Parks Service in its mission of environmental stewardship.

The area will be managed as part of a regional ecosystem and the connections with other portions of Yoho National Park and adjoining areas will be recognized and actively incorporated in to biophysical studies as well as visitor impact management of the area.

The existing level of development will not have expanded. When renovated or redeveloped, structures and trails will be located and designed in harmony with the landscape and cultural heritage.

The Canadian Parks Service, with the support and assistance of a variety of knowledgeable and dedicated public and private sector partners, will be able to protect and manage the area's resources and visitor use effectively and unobtrusively.

All activities of visitors, partners, and the Canadian Parks Service will exhibit a continuing commitment to state of the art environmental stewardship.

2.0 ECOSYSTEM INTEGRITY

In accordance with the Canadian Parks Service's mandate the primary purpose of the Yoho National Park Management Plan is to maintain or achieve ecological integrity within Yoho National Park and adjacent areas. The concept of ecological integrity encompasses not only natural and cultural resources but also an ethical judgment regarding the values of ecological processes.

An accurate description and scientific definition of ecological integrity within a national park setting is an ongoing process within the Canadian Parks Service. The definition includes such factors as the maintenance of species diversity and the viability of native populations of plants and animals.

2.1 Land Use Zoning

Land use zoning is utilized in the Canadian national parks system to provide direction on resource protection in relation to physical development and intensity of visitor use. Five zones have been designated within Yoho National Park:

Zone I : Special Preservation
Zone II : Wilderness
Zone III: Natural Environment
Zone IV : Outdoor Recreation
Zone V : Park Services

Two of these, Zone II-Wilderness and Zone III-Natural Environment, are represented in the planning area as shown on **Fig 3.**

The Natural Environment (Zone III) area encompasses those portions of the planning area where the access road, campground, lodges and shelters, as well as hardened trails, have been developed to accommodate the existing recreation uses. The hardening of trails and similar management techniques which localize or limit visitor impact are appropriate for resource protection within this zone. Seasonal closures or facility relocation may also be utilized to minimize impacts.

Zone II (Wilderness) represents a higher degree of resource protection where facility construction and site hardening are normally not appropriate. Seasonal and permanent closure of areas may occur if required for the protection of heritage resources.

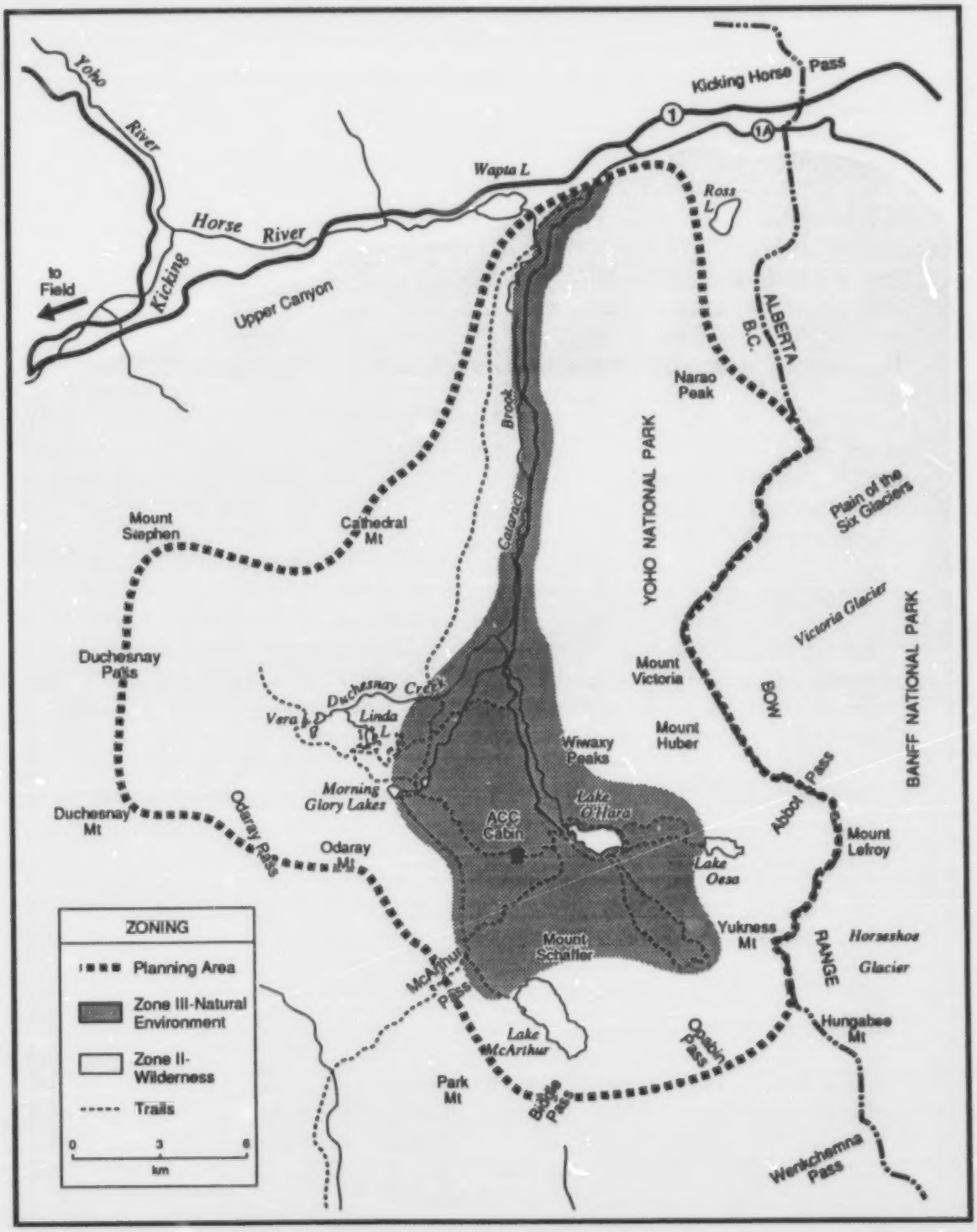

Figure 3. Land-Use Zoning Proposal in the Lake O'Hara Area

2.2 Heritage Resources

The following sections highlight components of the biophysical and cultural resources of Yoho National Park which are particularly significant in the management of the O'Hara area.

2.2.1 Wildlife

Recent grizzly bear studies in the Lake O'Hara area have confirmed a much higher level of activity than previously estimated.

The planning area also contains excellent winter and summer mountain goat habitat.

Mountain goats and grizzly bears are two of the high profile and easily recognized species found within the area. However, information about a much broader spectrum of animal species is required in order to gauge the health of the wildlife component of the ecosystem.

Plan Proposals

*Scientific studies of the grizzly bear population in the area will be continued in order to provide an information base to gauge the possible impact of visitor activity. Seasonal or permanent closures of areas will occur if required to avoid potential conflicts. The planning area will be managed to ensure that the current grizzly bear range is not reduced.

*Visitors will be made aware of the importance of the planning area for this significant wilderness indicator species.

*The possible impact of established alpine routes on goat populations will be investigated. Measures to minimize these impacts may include route closures (seasonal or permanent), relocation of hiking routes, and education of visitors.

2.2.2 Cultural Resources

The Elizabeth Parker Hut and Wiwaxy Lodge, operated as an alpine shelter by the Alpine Club of Canada, are recognized by the Federal Heritage Building Review Office (FHBRO) as historic buildings. Such recognition encourages the protection of historic features. Other buildings such as the Lake O'Hara Lodge and associated cabins are also significant to the area's history.

The extensive trail network in the area is also of historic interest. The network represents a physical imprint of the pattern of use and records the evolution of trail design and construction through eighty years of recreation activity.

Plan Proposals

* A review of all of the buildings in the Lake O'Hara area not currently recognized through FHBRO designation will be undertaken to assess their historical importance.

* Where possible, and where other resource protection requirements permit, the traditional uses associated with historic buildings will be maintained.

2.2.3 Vegetation

Sub-alpine and alpine vegetation, in addition to having botanical and ecological value, are a highly valued component of Lake O'Hara's scenic appeal for most visitors. Rare and localized plant communities are also found within the widespread and fragile alpine ecoregion.

Plan Proposals

* A Limits of Acceptable change framework will be designed for the rare plant communities on the Opabin Plateau, at Lake Oesa, and in the McArthur Pass area (transition from the dry vegetation community in McArthur Creek) to monitor and ensure the viability of these plant communities (see Section 4.2 for further discussion of Limits of Acceptable Change (L.A.C.).

* Continuing efforts will be made to inform all visitors of the importance of plant communities in the O'Hara area, and of the need for minimum-impact visitor behavior.

2.2.4 Fisheries and Aquatic Resources

No species of fish are native to the O'Hara area. However, a variety of fish species, some native to other portions of Yoho National Park and some exotic species, have been introduced to lakes in the area.

Plan Proposals

*No stocking of fish will take place in any portion of the planning area.

*Fishing will continue to be a recognized activity only in Lake O'Hara and Cataract Creek in accordance with current Canadian Parks Service policy on sportfishing.

3.0 PARK OPPORTUNITIES AND INTENDED EXPERIENCES

The protected environments and ecosystems found in national parks, in addition to their intrinsic value, provide visitors with the opportunity to experience and enjoy Canada's special places.

People are encouraged to visit national parks to the extent that such use is compatible with ecosystem protection. A fundamental theme, and an important result of a visit to the Lake O'Hara area, will be an increased awareness of environmental stewardship.

The Canadian Parks Service will build on the existing sense of stewardship many visitors feel for the Lake O'Hara area and endeavor to extend this sense of stewardship beyond national park boundaries.

3.1 History of Recreation Use

The history of recreation use and the associated development of trails and overnight accommodations in the area are important factors in its attraction to visitors today.

In 1909 the Alpine Club of Canada held its first Lake O'Hara mountaineering camp. The Canadian Pacific Railway built Wiwaxy Lodge in 1911 and started the main lodge at Lake O'Hara in 1926.

Construction of trails by private groups and individuals accompanied the development of buildings until 1952. Such trail builders as Lawrence Grassi, a parks warden, and Dr. Link, a long-time lodge guest are now part of the legend and romance of Lake O'Hara. As well, organizations such as the Friends of Yoho and the Lake O'Hara Trails Club have made significant contributions to the area over the years.

The Canadian Parks Service took over responsibility for trails in the area in the early 1950's and the existing network of trails was largely complete by 1961.

By the early 1970's approximately 6500 visitors per year (65% of them day-users) were arriving in the area by bus. Unrestricted use and in some cases inappropriate visitor behavior had resulted in severe biophysical impacts such as trampling of meadows and numerous braided trails.

A series of management actions were initiated to eliminate or reduce these impacts. Steps taken included: a visitor education campaign; the elimination of random camping and the construction of a 30 site campground; and the institution of a day-use quota.

During 1990 approximately 7200 people visited the Lake O'Hara area during the summer and fall. Day-users made up just over 40% of this total. During the winter of 1990-91 an estimated 1500-2000 people skied in to Lake O'Hara, with the majority of visitation on a day-use basis.

Although the total number of people visiting the area during the summer and fall has not changed significantly during the past twenty years the total number of visitor-days has shown a gradual increase (12,000 in 1972 to over 14,500 in 1990). This increase is a result of higher occupancy rates during peak summer season, people staying for longer periods, and an increase in spring and fall use. (The estimated 1500-2000 winter visitors in 1990-91 are not included in these statistics.)

3.2 Market Position of Lake O'Hara in Yoho National Park

The Lake O'Hara area occupies a unique niche in the spectrum of opportunities provided in the Rocky Mountain national parks by providing limited public transportation access to an intensively developed, historically significant, and spectacular alpine area.

Visitor demand is expected to continue to greatly exceed what the area can accommodate if the intended park opportunities are to be provided (current Canadian Parks Service estimates indicate approximately 25-35% of summer season demand is being met). However, the range of park experiences and overnight accommodation which will continue to be provided will ensure that a broad spectrum of Canadians and other visitors may enjoy the area.

The Lake O'Hara area will continue to provide opportunities for three segments of the park visitor population. The three "market segments" and typical activities associated with them for the Lake O'Hara area are: *outdoor adventure* (mountaineering, ski touring); *discovery and learning* (wildlife viewing, hiking), and *relaxation getaway* (walking, fishing, photography).

Use of the area by package tour groups and convention-goers is not appropriate, since the intended park experience is derived from uncrowded use by individuals, families and small groups.

3.3 Intended Visitor Experiences

The management intent for the planning area is to provide visitors with an uncrowded backcountry experience. During the hiking seasons, "uncrowded" will be defined by the number of people encountered/perceived per day by hikers in the area.

There are a number of ways to influence trail encounters including such techniques as one-way trails, staggered starts, and quotas for individual trails. However, in response to the 1989 visitor survey, and in order to facilitate the feeling of self-reliance and freedom associated with a backcountry experience, visitor management techniques will emphasize information and education rather than direct controls once visitors have entered the O'Hara area.

A day-use quota to limit the total number of people entering the area by bus (see Section 4.3) will also be maintained as an indirect means to limit trail encounters.

The Yoho National Park management plan identifies three categories of backcountry opportunities, from the most-used and developed (semi-primitive) to the least used (wildland). These backcountry opportunity areas represent gradations within the overall "uncrowded backcountry experience" intended for the planning area as follows:

Semi-Primitive:

-The semi-primitive areas will provide an opportunity to hike away from the road, a sense of getting away from built structures, and a pleasant, tranquil hike, requiring moderate physical effort.
-Visitors will normally encounter no more than 15-25 people per day during their hiking experience.
-Trails will be hardened where necessary to allow safe and relatively easy walking but the trail will not be obtrusive in the environment.

Primitive:

-The primitive opportunity area is less developed, requires more self-reliance and is less used than semi-primitive. Trails and alpine routes will be maintained to an adequate standard to protect the terrain but will be narrower and often of a rougher grade than those in the semi-primitive area.
-Most hikes in to this area will require at least a half day walk from Lake O'Hara. Natural in character, the sub-alpine and alpine regions provide spectacular scenery and an opportunity for a secluded outing requiring considerable physical effort and a degree of self-sufficiency and route-finding ability.
-Hikers will normally meet no more than 5-10 other visitors per day in the primitive area of Lake O'Hara.

Wildland:

-The wildland areas are the furthest from the trailhead and contain no trails except for the McArthur Pass trail.
-Visitors to this area will experience pristine high-alpine scenery in the most remote portions of the Lake O'Hara area. Backcountry mountaineering skills are needed to safely travel through this zone.
-Except on the route to Abbott Pass, the backcountry traveler in the wildland area will encounter fewer than 5 people per day.

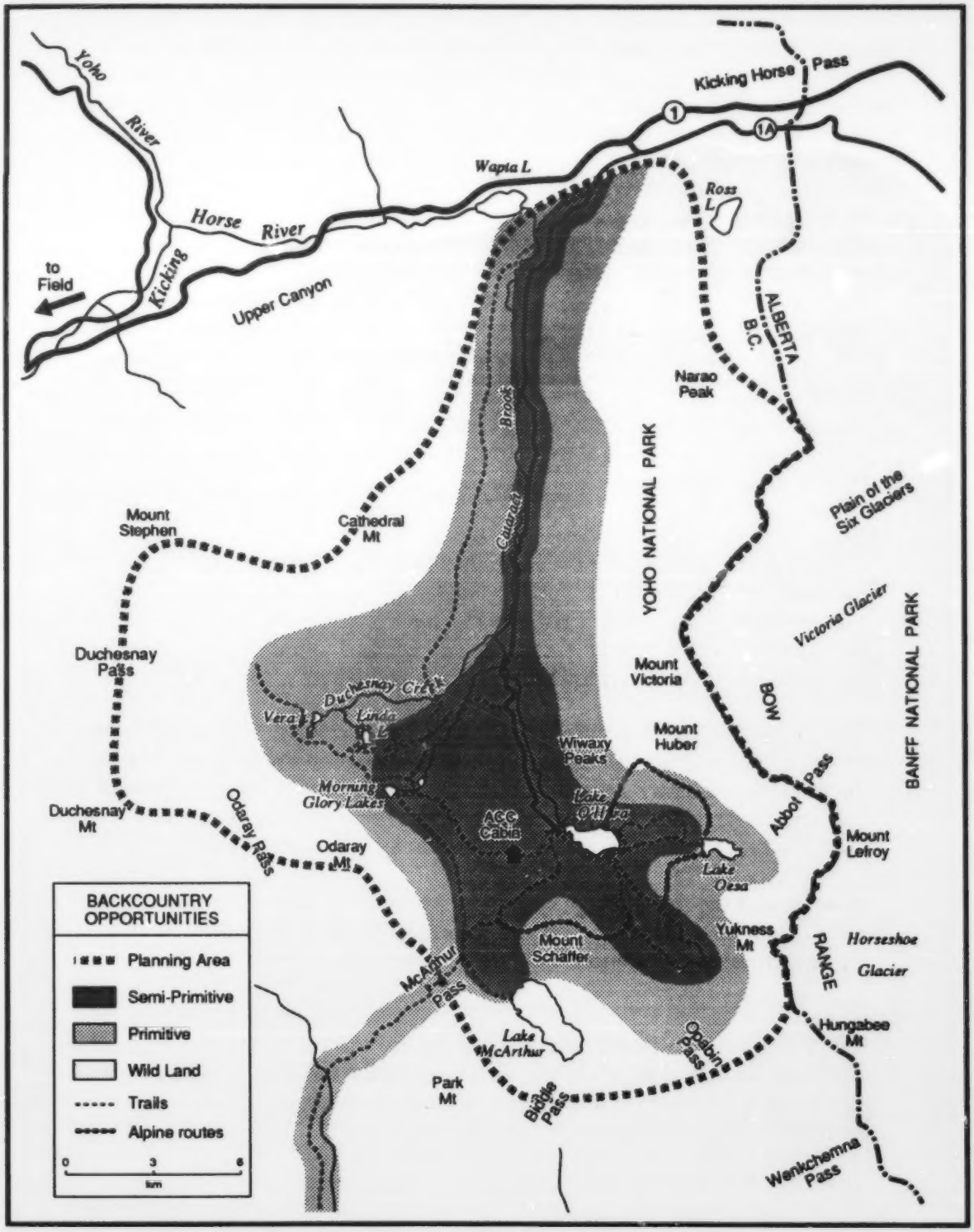

Figure 4. Back-Country Opportunities in the Lake O'Hara Area

The general location of intended semi-primitive, primitive, and wildland opportunities is shown in **Figure 4.**

The mapped areas represent opportunities for summer and fall use. Comparable mapping for winter use is not included because information on visitor-use and visitor experiences during the winter months is limited, and no suitable measures have yet been developed to assess crowding in the winter. Yoho National Park will manage winter use to provide opportunities for an uncrowded backcountry experience and suitable standards will be developed to monitor this goal.

3.4 Recreation Opportunities

A wide spectrum of national park backcountry recreation activities such as hiking, mountaineering, climbing, and skiing are possible in the O'Hara area. Special provisions for, or changes to, the existing management practices are recommended for the following activities:

Hiking:

*Hiking is the core activity for virtually all visitors to O'Hara during the summer and fall. To ensure that appropriate hiking opportunities continue to be provided the "Lake O'Hara Trail Guidelines" prepared for the Canadian Parks Service in 1989 by Gardner Associates will be used to match trail construction techniques with the intended backcountry experiences outlined in Section 3.3.

*Several redundant or multiple trails in the Opabin Plateau and Lake O'Hara area (e.g."Needles and Ridges" trail) will be closed and reclaimed. In addition, the timbered stairway structure on the Opabin Plateau is inappropriate for the area and the feasibility of modifying or removing it will be evaluated. The area plan will set priorities for trail rehabilitation and relocation work.

*A review of the trail signage system in the area will take place in order to ensure that the design, location and information on existing signs complements the backcountry experience.

Bicycling:

*Bicycling is currently not permitted on the Lake O'Hara road. Due to public safety concerns and potential conflicts with motor vehicles, as well as the administrative difficulty of imposing a day-use quota on cyclists, bicycling will continue to be prohibited on the Lake O'Hara road.

Dogsledding:

*Commercial and private dogsledding currently make up a small portion of winter use on the Lake O'Hara road. Due to the intensive use of this road by cross-country skiers, dogsledding will no longer be permitted within the planning area.

Skiing:

Cross country skiing activities have increased significantly in the last ten years and the Lake O'Hara road is the most popular cross-country ski route in Yoho National Park. Although high avalanche hazards are present in much of the area ski touring is also becoming more popular.

*Visitor surveys and on-site monitoring are required in order to understand and appropriately manage winter use in the future. The Lake O'Hara Area Plan will include a schedule for the completion of work required to establish a management framework consistent with the vision for the area.

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Environmental stewardship is the process whereby the Canadian Parks Service, in partnership with visitors and other stakeholders, will achieve the goals of ecosystem protection and intended visitor experiences in the planning area.

While Yoho National Park will be responsible for implementing the Lake O'Hara Area Plan, effective and timely implementation will require a cooperative effort from a variety of existing stakeholders such as the Alpine Club of Canada, Friends of Yoho, Lake O'Hara Lodge, the O'Hara Trails Club, and the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Association.

Yoho National Park will continue to actively facilitate appropriate cooperative efforts and partnerships with these and other stakeholder groups.

4.1 Communication

The Canadian Parks Service will ensure that stakeholders and potential visitors are aware of the park opportunities to be provided in the Lake O'Hara area and of the stewardship role that both the Canadian Parks Service and visitors have.

In keeping with the freedom and self-sufficiency associated with the intended backcountry experience, emphasis in communication will focus on pre-trip and personal media such as maps, pamphlets and guidebooks rather than on-site displays.

4.2 Limits of Acceptable Change

Limits of acceptable change (L.A.C.) is a tool which will be used to measure the effectiveness of ecosystem protection and the delivery of visitor opportunities in the planning area.

The concept of limits of acceptable change will be applied in the Lake O'Hara area to monitor:
-the health of the biophysical components of the ecosystem
-the status of the culturally significant features
-the quality of the park experiences people have.

The types of indicators which may be monitored include soil compaction, vegetative cover, variation in animal movement patterns and populations, conditions of trails, perceptions of crowding, and the physical and aesthetic condition of historic buildings.

4.3 Overnight Accommodation and Day-Use Quota

The "vision statement" cited earlier in this document states that development will not increase, and visitors will continue to enjoy their experiences in an "uncrowded setting". This section of the plan establishes levels of development for overnight accommodation and proposes several options for a day-use quota. The setting of such capacities and quotas are management tools to help maintain an uncrowded backcountry atmosphere in the Lake O'Hara area where a level of development and access exist which is intermediate between Yoho National Park's frontcountry and backcountry areas.

Existing and recommended overnight capacities of the campground and the Lake O'Hara Lodge are lower in the winter season than during the summer. Recommended overnight winter capacities are based on the ability of existing facilities to handle campers and lodge guests. Also, because day-skiers make up a large proportion of use in the winter, a reduced winter overnight capacity will reduce the likelihood of crowding in winter (refer to comments in Section 3.4 regarding winter use.)

The current population of summer visitors in the area is approximately 200-250 people per day when all overnight accommodation and day-use spaces are being utilized.

A. O'Hara Campground.
*The present capacity of 30 campsites will not be expanded. The campground and associated facilities will be modified to enhance the camping experience which is transitional between frontcountry and backcountry.

*The winter capacity (November-May) of the campground will be set at 10 sites. Little is known about winter camping patterns in the area and the adequacy of the site to handle this number will be monitored.

B. Alpine Club of Canada.

*Current combined capacity of the Elizabeth Parker and Wiwaxy huts in the Alpine Club meadow is approximately 24 persons. In accordance with the historic use of these buildings and the Yoho National Park guidelines for backcountry huts and shelters, total capacity for Alpine Club facilities in the O'Hara area (excluding the Abbott Pass Hut) will not exceed 30 persons. Maximum winter capacity will also be 30.

*The Yoho National Park Management Plan (1988) provides for the possible construction of a new Alpine Club of Canada facility adjacent to the Lake O'Hara road.

Plan Proposals

Option A.

*Use of present huts with continued rehabilitation of the meadow and the upgrading of human waste disposal facilities to ensure protection of ground and surface water.

*Expansion to a capacity of 30 would be considered if compatible with historic and environmental guidelines.

Option B.

*New facility constructed (capacity of 30) west of road between the campground and day lodge.

*Appropriate alternative use of the historic Wiwaxy and Elizabeth Parker huts would be part of such a redevelopment.

Option C.

*New facility with capacity of 24 constructed adjacent to road with the quota for Elizabeth Parker and Wiwaxy huts reduced to 6.

C. Lake O'Hara Lodge.

*Summer capacity of the main lodge and separate guest cabins is approximately 60 persons. This capacity will not be increased. The setback of the lakeside cabins will be reviewed by the Canadian Parks Service if a proposal to redevelop the cabins is made in the future.

*The current lease allows for the lodge to operate a "summer" season between May 29 and October 31 and this operating season will not be extended.

*Winter operation is currently limited to the main lodge building with a capacity of 16 guests from December 11 to April 16. Winter operation will continue to be restricted to the main lodge and the operating season will remain the same.

D. Day-use Bus Quota

A day-use quota of 36 is currently imposed for those visitors wanting to reach the area via the public bus system. The level of the quota was set 15 years ago on the basis of potential bus seats available and not on any perceived capacity of the area to accommodate day-users. No limit has been set for individuals wanting to hike in for the day.

A high degree of support for the continuation of a day-use quota was shown in the 1989 visitor survey conducted in the area.

The day-use quota is one of the tools (along with limiting overnight accommodation, and providing information to visitors) that is being used by the Canadian Parks Service to provide opportunities for uncrowded backcountry experiences in the planning area. (see Section 3.3)

The planning team is confident that the current quota of 36 can be increased without affecting the level of trail encounters currently being experienced. This could be accomplished by distributing the additional quota as suggested in Option "A" below.

Plan Proposals

Option A.

*That the day-use bus quota be increased from 36 to 52 by:

1.allotting a quota of 6 to the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides guides licensed to operate in Yoho (these users would utilize the least-frequented portions of the planning area).

2.allotting a quota of 10 on the first afternoon bus to the general public on a first-come first-served basis (would allow for approximately 90 minutes to visit the area prior to the departure of the last outbound bus).

Option B.

* Retain the current quota of 36

4.4 Public Transportation Service

The purpose of the public transportation system in to Lake O'Hara is to provide motorized access to the area during the "summer" months from mid-June to mid-October for people of all ages and abilities. The bus system, currently operated by Lake O'Hara Lodge will also continue to be used as a means for limiting the number of day-visitors to the area during the summer and fall.

Within established quotas and seasons of use motorized public transportation access will be equally available to all user groups and will be operated on a "user-pay" basis. The surcharge on the bus fare, collected by the O'Hara Trails Club for the purpose of trail maintenance in the area, is an example of the partnerships Yoho National Park may enter into with stakeholders in order to fulfill its mandate.

The public transportation system will be utilized to support the quality of visitors' experiences whenever possible. Figure 5 outlines one option for a bus schedule and a possible allocation of the quotas cited previously.

Figure 5. BUS SYSTEM (incoming buses)

	8:30am	10:30am	4:30pm	7:30pm
Campers	10	26	no limit with reservation	
Alpine Club	12	12	no limit with reservation	
Lodge	15	15	no limit with reservation	
Day users	26	10	10	0
Guides	6	0	0	0

The last outbound bus will leave O'Hara no earlier than 6:30 in the evening.

The maximum season for motorized public transportation access to the area will be from mid-June to mid-October. If visitation does not warrant scheduled bus service early or late in the season the public transportation system may operate on a charter basis during those periods.

4.5 Reservation System

A reservation system allows potential visitors to plan their trips and enables Yoho National Park to provide equitable access to the Lake O'Hara area within the quotas to be set for the planning area.

At the present time the Canadian Parks Service manages reservations for the 30 campsites at Lake O'Hara and for bus seats for campers, day-users and Alpine Club of Canada hut users. The current reservation system is being examined and changes to the system will be guided by the following principles:

1. accessible on an equitable basis to potential visitors
2. visitor-friendly and service oriented
3. minimize the number of "no-shows"
4. allow a reasonable period of time for trip planning following confirmation (minimum 30 days)
5. as simple as possible and understandable to all those using the system

Reservations for the campground and day-use can currently be made by telephone, facsimile, or in person. Concern has been expressed regarding the difficulty of getting through on the telephone and the alternative of a mail-in lottery system is being considered. While telephone reservations provide immediate results and allow for alternative dates to be considered a mail-in lottery system may provide more equitable access to the reservation system.

Plan Proposals

Two alternatives are being considered for taking day-use and campsite reservations:

Option A.

*mail-in requests selected by lottery 30 days prior to visit date. Requests could be mailed to the park at any time.

Option B.

*telephone on first-come first-serve basis, a maximum of 30 days prior to visit (current system).

4.6 Access and Infrastructure

The Lake O'Hara Area Plan will also address in detail a number of improvements to the public and private infrastructure in the planning area. These improvements are required for environmental protection, for aesthetic reasons, and to enhance visitor experiences. They include:

* rehabilitation of shoulders of O'Hara Road
* potable water supply and greywater system for the campground
* upgrading of the Lake O'Hara lodge sewage treatment facility
* trail construction/upgrading between the campground and the day lodge area.
* environmentally appropriate means of generating electricity in lodge area.
* upgrading aesthetics of lodge maintenance area
* improvements to Alpine Club of Canada human waste disposal system
* facilities for disabled access

These improvements will be made within the goal set in the Vision Statement that the Lake O'Hara area will serve as an example of state of the art environmental practices by the Canadian Parks Service, stakeholders, partners and visitors to the area.